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ABSTRACT

The Japanese presence in the United States is growing rapidly in business and higher education. With many communication courses enrolling both Japanese and American students, the instructor is faced with a challenging opportunity: to institute course work in intercultural communication. However, when an intercultural course is not feasible, an emphasis on intercultural communication can be incorporated into the small group communication course. Instructors wishing to include intercultural materials should become familiar with current scholarship in the field. Three issues must be considered before planning the modifications for a course: (1) whether to use a culture-general or culture-specific approach; (2) the differing concepts of "group" in Japan and the United States; and (3) possible classroom activities and communication strategies to be emphasized. Culture-specific approaches, featuring a direct comparison of the two cultures, have merit. Japanese students often have some difficulty feeling comfortable as part of a group. This reflects the fact that Japanese and American assumptions about the structure, participation, and relationships in groups are quite different. Communication concepts worth emphasizing include ethnocentricity and stereotyping, Japanese-American differences, status, disclosure, decision-making strategies and conflict management. Adding an intercultural dimension to communication classes should be considered by all instructors of such courses. Twenty-four references and four appendixes (a questionnaire on stereotypes, a class activity on diversity, an assignment for small group communication, and a summary on conflict characteristics) are attached. (HB)

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More than Cut and Paste:
Integrating Cross-cultural Communication into the Curriculum

Merging The United States and Japan: Intercultural Communication in the Small Group Course

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Heidelberg College
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Integrating Intercultural Communication into the Small Group Course

The Japanese presence in the United States is growing rapidly in business and in higher education. In 1986, Japanese owned over 1,000 businesses, from service organizations to marketing and distributing firms, from trading companies to manufacturing facilities (Bowman, 1986). In 1991, Japanese companies owned 10% or more of 1,563 plants in the United States. These facilities, located in 49 states with heaviest concentrations in the Midwest and California, employed 350,000 workers (Fortune, 1992). Most of these employees are American although many managers are Japanese. Japan's economic ties to the United States are strong and will not diminish in the forseeable future (Naisbett & Aburdene, 1990).

In 1989, an estimated 24,000 Japanese were enrolled in American colleges and universities, although most were concentrating on English as a second language (Gittlesohn, 1989). Some institutions have significant concentrations. At Heidelberg College, Japanese students on Japan and Ohio campuses comprise 9% of the traditional student body. Most of these students are seeking degrees in Business Administration. All are required to take a public speaking course and many also enroll in small group communication.

Koester and Lustig (1991) believe that we should be teaching our students that skills taught within the Anglo U.S. culture may not be appropriate within other U.S. and international contexts. As increasing numbers of American students can expect to work for Japanese firms and managers and as increasing numbers of Japanese students study on American campuses, this advice is particularly salient. When many of these future co-workers are enrolled in communication classes, a challenge and an exciting opportunity is offered to the communication instructor.

The obvious response would be to institute course work in intercultural communication. In smaller (and some larger) institutions, however, staff and budgetary restraints often prohibit curriculum additions.

This paper will outline a rationale and strategies for incorporating an emphasis on intercultural communication into the small group communication course when an intercultural course is not feasible. The small group course was selected because of the prevalence of work

groups in both American and Japanese management styles and because the course is an elective in the Business Administration major[1]. Given the dominance of Japan and the U.S. in the world market and the Heidelberg demographics, a major focus is on Japanese-American differences.

A classroom experience called attention to the need to examine intercultural communication differences. Early in the semester, the old Kidney Machine exercise is used to help focus on group process; students write a process analysis following the exercise. One term a particularly outspoken Japanese student not only argued strongly for his candidates but demanded to know why Americans could have chosen others. The papers that term reported a lively discussion on values and the differences in the two cultures. At that point, it was apparent that the course was highly ethnocentric even through students would be living and working in multicultural groups throughout their lives. Intercultural information needs to be added.

An instructor anticipating the inclusion of intercultural materials in any course needs to be, or become, knowledgeable in the current scholarship of intercultural studies. In 1986, Beebe and Biggers determined that most persons teaching the intercultural course had no graduate training in the field. In this author's case the graduate course was long ago so considerable updating was required. Reading has been complemented by brief stays in China and Japan, by conversation with faculty colleagues and with Japanese students. The task continues. Fortunately an abundance of material related to intercultural communication is available.

Locating material, however, is a major problem for the instructor who chooses to focus on Japanese-American differences. A computer search of the psychological literature located fewer than ten relevant articles. Many major works and most undergraduate texts coming from the communication discipline focus primarily on theoretical constructs. A few more specific articles are located in books of collected reading but detailed information is more often scattered in the literature of business and management.

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[1] The curriculum contains no Organizational Communication course where similar intercultural concepts might be integrated. On this panel, Georgia Swanson's paper addresses that possibility.

Several sources do provide helpful overviews for the instructor's initial reading. Among these are Condon's *With Respect to the Japanese* (1984), Okabe's article "Cultural Assumptions of East and West: Japan and the United States" in *Cross-cultural interpersonal communication* (1991) edited by Ting-Toomey and Korzenny, and Barnlund's *Communicative Styles of Japanese and Americans* (1989).

Several pedagogical issues require examination when planning the modifications for the course. Those considered here include (1) determining whether to use a culture-general or culture-specific approach, (2) the differing concepts of "group" in Japan and the U. S., and (3) possible classroom activities and communication strategies to be emphasized.

CULTURE-GENERAL OR CULTURE-SPECIFIC?

A philosophic decision one must make when contemplating either an intercultural course or component in a course is whether the approach should be culture-general or culture-specific (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey & Wiseman, 1991). A culture-general approach focuses on the general factors influencing communication between people from different cultures or ethnic groups. A culture-specific approach focuses on information about a culture and guidelines for interaction with members of that culture. Gudykunst et. al. (1991) argue that the general approach is a superior method of preparing students for a wide variety of situations. They suggest the culture-specific procedure only if the instructor is an expert, *i.e.*, fluent in the language, has lived in the culture. Their reasoning for the culture-general approach in the intercultural communication course cannot be faulted.

When teaching the small group course for a mixed population or for those who will be working with Japanese people, however, a direct comparison of the two cultures (culture-specific) has merit. A general understanding of cultural differences must, of course, be developed so that students can make sense of, categorize the more specific details. But if instruction stops at the theoretical level, students are required to fashion specific communication strategies based on their own limited experiences and interpretations of the theories. First, as this is but a component of the course, the general materials will be

necessarily limited. Further, many students both American and Japanese are ethnocentric and fairly unlikely to draw accurate or detailed understandings of communication in the other culture without some specific descriptions. To expect them to do so is unrealistic.

Although having culture-specific courses or components taught only by those who speak the language and have lived in the culture (Gudykunst et. al., 1991) is certainly an excellent goal, it is an unobtainable goal for a small college. At Heidelberg, we have one such person plus two others who have spent one year living in Japan. The choice is either to ignore the issue or to utilize a person with interest and sensitivity, albeit lesser knowledge. I believe that some, with concern, is better than none.

The group course is task-oriented with strong emphasis on process skill development. This, plus the presence of international students mostly Japanese, has led to a combination of culture-general and culture-specific activities. Reading provides some introductory theoretical concepts while other materials and activities focus directly on specific cultural differences (these will be described later).

If the mix of students or their career expectations were to differ, the focus on culture-specific materials might favor other groups or the culture-general approach might become more appropriate.

WHAT DOES GROUP-ORIENTED MEAN?

Faculty advisers tend to suggest the small group course to the Japanese students for some excellent and some faulty reasons. Many recommend the course, believing that it will be easier than public speaking for the student whose verbal skills are marginal. Actually, the rapid and often fragmented communication of a group requires greater facility with English than does public speaking. Students with lower verbal skills are easily frustrated, drop the course, or receive low grades. Fortunately, most advisers now recognize that the group course is appropriate only for those proficient in conversational English.

Another common assumption is that students should be comfortable and successful in the group course because they come from a "group culture." This conclusion ignores important

cultural differences in group membership, interpersonal relationships, and communication patterns. These differences are related to the cultural characteristic of individualism-collectivism. Individualistic cultures stress the individual who is supposed to look after himself and his immediate family. Collectivist cultures focus on the group and people belonging to in-groups which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty. The U. S. is considered a highly individualistic culture while Japan is considered moderately collectivist (Gudykunst, Yoon and Nishida, 1987). This difference has a significant impact on expectations and interaction in group communication.

An American cultural assumption reflected in small group courses is that groups can and frequently do start from zero history. American students are accustomed to becoming members of new groups charged with completing a task. In primary and secondary education, in church groups, in social organizations, they have worked with groups. They come to the class experienced in interacting with strangers. They have often set goals, handled conflict, developed trust relationships, earned and attributed status. They are accustomed to expressing their opinions freely. Many are not highly skilled, but they have had experience with a variety of groups and understand the cultural expectations concerning participation.

Although they live in a group-oriented culture, Japanese students have not had these experiences unless they have had previous experience with American education. At Heidelberg, those students who have spent their freshman year on the Japan campus have had some experience. For those who transfer from Japanese universities, the idea of group discussion is threatening. Even a recitation class can be fearful for Japanese education relies almost exclusively on lecturing and memorization. There is little emphasis on analysis, discussion or debate (Gittelsohn). For many Japanese studying in America, the family is the only "group" in which they have participated.

Cultural differences which influence group process are not limited to student life. The lifespans of groups differ significantly in the two cultures. Tucker (1992) describes the American expectation that work groups will have zero history and are quite impersonal:

> The composition of small work groups is based on the skills that each member brings to the group, without particular regard for the interpersonal relationships among the members. The team will form, work together (and separately) to accomplish its objectives and will disband.

In Japan, groups composed of strangers are not common; groups are stable over a long time period. Japanese distinguish those "in" and "out" of the group. When persons become part of the group, they are not likely to be dismissed. Work groups are characterized by politeness, indirect language and conflict avoidance. Unlike American workers, Japanese socialize together after work hours (Condon, 1984, p. 28, 72).

Another difference is the concept of horizontal and vertical interpersonal relations. A horizontal society is based on assumed equality. The United States is a horizontal society where communication occurs between presumed equals. Conversely, the principle of hierarchy is fundamental and pervasive in Japanese culture. Japan is a vertical society divided into numerous groups which have multiple status layers (Reischauer, 1977).

Okabe (1991) argues that independence is predominant in the horizontal society. The U.S is a horizontal society with a "doing" orientation where objectifiable and practical doing acitivites are more highly valued than sentient ones (Condon and Yousef, 1975). For Americans, the individual is basic, not the group. The "I" and "You" clash in argument and try to persuade each other. They may enjoy a heated discussion as a sort of intellectual game. Each is responsible for self, without undo regard for the other. American individualism encourages self-assertion and frank expression of opinion; Americans will argue back when challenged.

In contrast, interdependence is the value that dominates the stratified, vertical and being culture of Japan. Generally, the culture views man as in search of self-discovery or fulfillment and the "We" predominates over "I" in Japanese relationships (Condon and Yousef, 1975). What others think and say is of greater importance than what the individual does (Okabe, 1991). The Japanese are very cautious when expressing personal opinions and when modifying their opinions to be consistent with those of others around them (Condon, 1977). Discussion, debate

and advocacy are rare in families and classrooms. Barnlund (1989) found Japanese to be shocked that American friendships survive strong clashes of opinion.

In a similar vein, Barnlund (1989) describes American conversation as assertive, a rhetoric of exclusion which emphasizes differences. Japanese interaction is conciliatory, a rhetoric of inclusion with emphasizes similarities of viewpoints. Americans indulge in overstatement and self-congratulation while Japanese tend to use understatement and self-depreciation.

Thus, while Japan is a "group oriented" culture, American and Japanese assumptions about structure, participation and relationships in groups are significantly different. These differing expectations about status and participation need to be understood when working with Japanese students in the small group course.

WHAT COMMUNICATION CONCEPTS SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED?

Adding some consideration of Japanese-American communication to the small group course requires both selection and integration. It should be noted that very little research has focused specifically on intercultural communication in small groups (Brilhart and Galanes, 1992). But many of the studies of interpersonal communication have relevance to group interactions.

Adding only a component to an existing course is an exercise in restraint. While one or more major exercises can perhaps be added to the syllabus, many concepts will need to be integrated into existing activities and lectures. Each instructor will need to select those concepts which are appropriate for the particular class syllabus.

The text *Effective Group Discussion* by Brilhart and Galanes (1992) has an excellent culture-general chapter in the 7th edition. Students read this early in the course to introduce the intercultural component.

Ethnocentricity and stereotyping These are the initial topics considered. The primarily Caucasian, midwestern students arrive with ethnocentric ideas firmly in place, as do the Japanese.

Stereotyping can be a trap for instructors as well as for students. Jonathan Rauch (1992) reminds us of Japanese diversity. Although Japanese believe themselves to be homogeneous, Rauch found "no fundamental similarity, no template, no recipe for Japaneseness." (45) Instead, "I am inclined to say that Japan is different, yes, but not especially different." (162) We instructors need to be diligent to determine real and significant differences to avoid unfair stereotyping as we learn and teach.

To encourage students to evaluate their own ethnocentricity, the first classroom exercise is a modification of an activity found in *Bridging Differences* (Gudykunst, 1991). Students are asked to select five characteristics of their group and five of the other. These are rated on favorable-unfavorable continua and favorableness scores computed (Appendix A). This event serves as a trigger for classroom discussion of stereotyping.

A similar exercise is used in the Heidelberg orientation program. Students list on newsprint characteristics or comments which they have heard about several cultures Half the group use orange markers to list unfavorable characteristics; the rest use blue and write favorable comments. After a few minutes, students exchange pens. The posters are then used as discussion triggers (Appendix B).

These conversations are but the first of many in which the contrast of cultural tendencies and individual variations are noted. Still Brilhart and Galanes emphasize the danger of overgeneralizing about cultural differences. This emphasis on the uniqueness of individuals in contrast to cultural patterns may be the single most important concept the students take from the course.

Japanese-American Differences Students read two articles which illustrate intercultural differences with many examples. Small groups develop newsprint lists of differences between the two groups on as many dimensions as can be listed in thirty minutes. These posters are compared and serve as triggers for discussion and reality checking in the larger group (Appendix C).

ADDITIONAL TOPICS TO BE CONSIDERED

Several additional cultural differences are introduced or elaborated on by the instructor when the topic is discussed in the class. Four are briefly outlined here, with concern. Each is a complex communicative behavior requiring more detailed explanation than is permitted in this paper. This segment is intended only to illustrate some possibilities for integrating the concepts into the small group course. Each instructor adding these components needs to undertake a more complete study before using the concepts.

Status The differing role of status in the two cultures has been noted. Japanese culture places great emphasis on ascribed status. Being older, of a reputable family and male all add to one's status. Where one goes to school is also a factor with attendance at Tokyo University required for the highest positions in the country (Okabe). Status is an implicit factor when a Japanese organization conducts external activities (Nakana, 1973). An example is the well-known ritual of business card exchange.

Within the organization, however, status distinctions blur and the concepts of teamwork become more significant. Leaders appear to be a part of the group.

Disclosure Barnlund (1975) pointed out that Americans tend to disclose more than Japanese. Interaction among Americans provides an opportunity for the expression of personal meanings, hence becomes an arena for confrontation. Ideas are its subject matter; argument its means. Valid conclusions are its aim. The maintenance of rapport is less important than stimulating a variety of points of view. Japanese, however, tend toward limited disclosure, and avoid differences to promote harmony.

For the Japanese, conversation is a way of creating the emotional ties that bind people together. Interpersonal attitudes are its content; intuition its mode. Social harmony is its aim. Differences of opinion and particularly argument, since they disrupt the atmosphere and divide the group, arouse apprehension. Japanese traditionally reserve most disclosure for the family alone (Barnlund, 1989).

Decision-making strategy The differences in decision-making strategies are significant and sources of annoyance when intercultural groups work together. In American democracy decisions are made by the majority for the greatest good of the greatest number without infringing on others' basic rights. Americans prefer a rational, specific, issue-oriented strategy of decision-making. In the process, specific facts and pieces of information lead to a reasoned solution (Nadler, Nadler and Broome, 1985).

The Japanese, however, seek decisions by a consensus of feeling in a slow process where discussion does not end until all have agreed. The process places emphasis on the emotional level of communication (Nadler et.al.). This belief in consensus places a high value on cohesion and group reward.

Nemawashi and *ringi* describe two elements of the Japanese decision making process (Okabe, Harris, 1989). Attempting to involve all parties in the process is called *nemawashi* or "root binding" and refers to the broad consultation before asking for a decision. Everyone has time to understand the goals and information to be used in the decision. This tends to produce widespread support for the final solution; preparation for implementation has occurred at the same time as the decision.

Ringi, or "a system of reverential inquiry about the superior's intentions," refers to a widespread circulation of a document to which many persons affix their seals to indicate having seen and approved the material. Thus a consensus can be obtained and verified.

Conflict management Conflict is a complex communicative experience, bounded by cultural demands and situational constraints. Ting-Toomey (1985) describes Japanese-American differences in conflict management as a function of high-context or low-context cultures (See Appendix D). In a low-context culture, meanings and interpretations of a message are found in the explicit communication codes. In a high-context culture, meanings and interpretations are found in implicitly shared, social and cultural knowledge. The U. S. is a low-context culture; Japan, a high-context.

Low-context persons are more likely to perceive situations and persons as separate concepts so an American will probably use heated discussion and issue-oriented arguments in a conflict situation. The Japanese have difficulty separating the event from the emotion and often sense rejection and see the conflict as a personal attack or sign of mistrust (Ting-Toomey, 1985). Publicly disagreeing with someone is an insult; both sides lose face.

Barnlund (1975b) described the differences:

> Americans prefer to defend themselves actively, exploring and developing the rationale for positions they have taken. When pushed, they may resort to still more aggressive forms that utilize humor, sarcasm, or denunciation. Among Japanese, the reactions are more varied, but ritualize encounters to avoid the triggering of threat, Americans may find such situations an inevitable consequence of their greater expressiveness.

Obviously, these concepts overlap. Nor are they the only elements which differ. Others such as power distance, nonverbal dimensions, language and gender are also significant differences which impac workers. Instructors must select the concepts which bes: fit their goals, their students.

CONCLUSION

The addition of an intercultural component to a small group course has merit when students are primarily headed for the world of work. When the workplace is international and the workers multinational, intercultural communication needs to be understood. The suggestions in this paper have been tested for three semesters in a small liberal arts college with Japanese and American students. While refinements will continue to be made, the procedures add a needed perspective to the course.

Some is better than none when there is no intercultural course.

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APPENDIX A

Assessing Your Stereotypes

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help you understand what your stereotypes of your own and other groups are. Several adjectives are listed below. Because stereotypes are specific to particular groups, you will have to think of specific groups. Think of one group of which you are a member (e.g., your cultural or ethnic group) and an outgroup (e.g., another culture or ethnic group). Put a check mark in the column "My Group" next to the five adjectives that apply to your group. Put a check mark in the column marked "Other Group" next to the five adjectives that apply to the outgroup you have selected. After you put your check marks, go back through the list and rate each adjective you checked in terms of how favorable of a quality the adjective is: 1 = very unfavorable, 2 = moderately unfavorable, 3 = neither favorable nor unfavorable, 4 = moderately favorable, and 5 = very favorable. Put these ratings in the column to the right of the adjectives.

My Group	Other Group		Favorableness My Group	Favorableness Other Group
____	____	Intelligent	____	____
____	____	Materialistic	____	____
____	____	Ambitious	____	____
____	____	Industrious	____	____
____	____	Deceitful	____	____
____	____	Conservative	____	____
____	____	Practical	____	____
____	____	Shrewd	____	____
____	____	Arrogant	____	____
____	____	Aggressive	____	____
____	____	Sophisticated	____	____
____	____	Conceited	____	____
____	____	Neat	____	____
____	____	Alert	____	____
____	____	Impulsive	____	____
____	____	Stubborn	____	____
____	____	Conventional	____	____
____	____	Progressive	____	____
____	____	Sly	____	____
____	____	Caring	____	____
____	____	Pleasure-loving	____	____

Adapted from Bridging Differences by William B. Gudykunst, (1991)

The adjectives you checked constitute the content of your stereotypes. To find out how favorable the stereotypes are add the numbers next to the adjectives checked. Compute separate favorableness scores for the stereotype of your group and the other group. Scores range from 5 to 25. The higher the score, the more favorable your stereotype.

APPENDIX B

TOTAL STUDENT DEVELOPMENT 1992
SESSION 20
APPRECIATION OF DIVERSITY

"READING THE WRITING ON THE WALL"

PURPOSE

1. To introduce groups to some basic concepts in communication between members of different racial, national, religious and other groups
2. To sensitize groups to the problems international students face upon their racial in the United States
3. To reflect on the importance of tolerance in relating to people of different nationalities, races, and religions and on the enrichment which comes from experiencing diversity.

PROCEDURES

1. On large pieces of paper taped to the wall, write the following words: (0ne per sheet)
   - Hispanics
   - Germans
   - Japanese
   - Chinese
   - Korean
   - Other Southeast Asians (Thailand, Nepal, Malaysia)
   - African American
   - Caucasian American
   - (Refer to Kohls' list regarding how Americans are perceived abroad)
2. Divide TSD group into 2 groups. Give half of group blue markers (positive statements) and half orange (negative comments) Blue marker students are then given 10 minutes to write all the positive stereotypical comments about each group that they have heard while the orange maker students write down all the negative stereotypical comments they can recall.
3. After 10 minutes, groups exchange makers and revers their roles
4. After the writing is on the wall, students form small groups to analyze what they have written. They are asked to look at similarities and differences in positive (blue) and negative (orange) stereotypes across target groups. Because of the color-coding, they can readily determine whether there is more blue or orange on the wall; the group which has the greatest ratio of blue to orange or orange to blue; and the group with the greatest/least sum of blue and orange.
5. The activity can be concluded with a general discussion of: the origins of stereotypical thinking; how stereotypes are perpetuated; personal prejudice and facilitating appreciation of diversity on campus. Feedback from students indicates that the "Reading the Writing on the Wall" activity promotes such appreciation and underscores the value of relating to people as individual human beings rather than stereotypes.

APPENDIX C
HEIDELBERG COLLEGE
COMMUNICATION AND THEATRE ARTS
INTERCULTURAL ASSIGNMENT FOR SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this assignment is to help you appreciate the wide differences in communication patterns between the Japanese and American cultures.

READING

Before beginning the exercise, you should review Chapter 7 in *Effective Group Discussion,* 7th ed. by Brilhart and Galanes.

In addition, you need to read the following articles in *Small Group Communication: a Reader* 6th ed. by Robert Cathcart and Larry Samovar:

"Communication in the Multicultural Group" by Porter and Samovar
"Comparing Group Communication Across Cultures: Leadership, Conformity, and Discussion Processes" by Lustig and Cassotta

You should bring your copy of the articles to class with you.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Class members will be divided into groups of four or five persons.
Each group will make a list of as many contrasting communication patterns of the Japanese and American cultures as possible:
Here's an example:

Japanese	American
High Context -- implicit meanings	Low Context -- verbalized meanings
conflict avoidance	open expression of conflict

Make your lists on the newsprint provided. You will have 25 minutes to work on this activity.

Each group will post their lists on the blackboards and the class will evaluate and combine them into one master list.

DISCUSSION TOPIC

What problems can each of these pairs create when Americans and Japanese are working together?

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LCC CONFLICT AND HCC CONFLICT

Key Questions	Low-Context Conflict	High-Context Conflict
Why	analytic, linear logic	synthetic, spiral logic
	instrumental-oriented	expressive-oriented
	dichotomy between conflict and conflict parties	integration of conflict and conflict parties
When	individualistic-oriented	group-oriented
	low collective normative expectations	high collective normative expectations
	violations of individual conflict potentials	violations of collective conflict potentials
What	revealment	concealment
	direct, confrontational attitude	indirect, nonconfrontational attitude
	action and solution-oriented "	face" and relationship-oriented
How	explicit communication codes	implicit communication codes
	line-logic style; rational factual rhetoric	point-logic style; intuitive-affective rhetoric
	open, direct strategies	ambiguous, indirect strategies

from "Toward a Theory of Conflict and Culture." Stella Ting-Toomey, in *Communication, Culture and Organizational Processes.* William Gudykunst, Lea Stewart, Stella Ting-Toomey, eds. Beverly Hills: Sage. 1985.